

Office of General Counsel

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December 10, 2004

Jeff S. Jordan
Supervisory Attorney
Complaints Examination & Legal Administration
Federal Election Commission
999 E. Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20463

Re: MUR 5550

Dear Mr. Jordan:

FEDERAL ELECTION
COMMISSION
OFFICE OF GENERAL
COUNSEL

On November 16, 2004, the Federal Election Commission ("FEC") received an amendment to a complaint from David Hardy, who apparently is alleging that the University of Cincinnati may have violated the Federal Election Campaign Act of 1971 ("Campaign Act"). The University received notice of the complaint from the FEC on November 29, 2004. Enclosed is the University's timely response to the complaint filed against it.¹

I. Complainant's Allegations

The Complainant does not make any specific claims as to which sections of the Campaign Act that the University may have violated. Indeed, he simply provides a quote from a local newspaper that Michael Moore, the subject of his complaint, appeared on campus. Nevertheless, it appears the Complainant is suggesting that a programming event sponsored by various University student organizations, wherein Mr. Moore was paid by student allocated fees for his services, was an attempt to influence a federal election.

Should the reading of the complaint be correct, the applicable section of the Campaign Act is 2 U.S.C. 441b(a), which provides that "it is unlawful. . . for any corporation whatever . . to a make a contribution or expenditure in connection with any election" for federal office. "Contribution or expenditure" is defined as a contribution or expenditure pursuant to 2 U.S.C. 431 and "any direct or indirect payment, distribution, loan, advance, deposit, or gift of money, or any services, or anything of value to any candidate, campaign committee, or political party or organization, in connection with any election . . ." 2 U.S.C. 441b(b)(2).

The term contribution includes "any gift, subscription, loan, advance, or deposit of money, or anything of value made by any person for the purpose of influencing any election for Federal office (2 U.S.C. 431(8)(A)(i)); while the term "expenditure" includes "any purchase, payment, distribution, loan, advance, deposit, or gift of money or anything of value,

¹ Attached is a Statement of Designation of Counsel signed by President Nancy Zimpher.

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made by any person for the purpose of influencing any election for Federal office." 2 U.S.C. 431(9)(A)(i).

II. Programming Event for Michael Moore

With respect to the matter before the FEC, Greater Talent Network ("GTN"), the lecture agent for Michael Moore, contacted the University's student run Programs & Activities Council inquiring as to its interest in having Mr. Moore speak on campus. GTN indicated that Mr. Moore would speak at a fee lower than his customary rate. The Programs & Activities Council and GTN agreed upon an \$8,000 speaking fee and an October 27, 2004 date. Various organized student groups agreed to co-sponsor the event and to pool the funds within their respective budgets to help pay for the event. The sponsoring student groups included the Programs & Activities Council, the Racial Awareness Program; the Undergraduate Funding Board; and Latinos En Accion. (Exhibit 1).

As with most student organizations, the funds within the budgets of the four sponsoring student groups are derived from the student general fee imposed on students that is used to provide non-instructional services to students. The fees are in addition to charges for tuition and room and board. While the general fee is mandatory, it is students, not the University, that determine how the funds are to be used and allocated.

III. Student Groups, not University, Paid for the Programming Event

While vague and difficult to decipher, it is our understanding that the Complainant is alleging that payment by the student groups to Michael Moore constituted an attempt by a corporation to influence a federal election.² We respectfully disagree. Any decision to select Michael Moore as a speaker for the programming event and to pay his lecture agent for his services was a decision made not by the University or any of it officials, but rather by its student groups.

The University of Cincinnati is a public educational institution exempt from taxation under state and federal law. As a tax-exempt state instrumentality, it is prohibited from participating or intervening in any political campaign on behalf of or in opposition to any candidate for public office.

Although the University of Cincinnati is not a 501(c)(3) organization, educational institutions that fall under the this Section of the tax code do not engage in prohibited political

² Again, due to the in artfully worded Complaint, we are of the understanding that Complainant is not alleging that any direct or indirect payment, distribution, gift of money, or anything of value was made to any candidate, campaign committee, or political party or organization, in connection with any election. Even if such an assertion was part of the Complaint, Mr. Moore is not, nor, to the University's knowledge, is he associated with a candidate, campaign committee, or political party or organization.

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advocacy under IRS rules merely because their students take part in such activities. "[I]n order to constitute participation or intervention in a political campaign, the political activity must be that of the University itself, and not the individual activity of its faculty, staff, or students." Judith E. Kindell and John Francis Reilly, "Election Year Issues" in *Exempt Organizations Continuing Professional Educational Education (CPE) Technical Instruction Program for Fiscal Year 2002* (October 2001) 344, available at www.irs.gov. As noted in Revenue Ruling 72-515 of the Internal Revenue Service and subsequently cited with approval by the IRS in its "Election Year Issues" publication, "the actions of students generally are not attributed to an educational institution unless they are undertaken at the direction of and with authorization from a school official." (Exhibit 2).

Using the above IRS ruling and publication as guidance for this matter, the University neither directed nor authorized the UFB to allocate funds to the student group for Mr. Moore's visit nor did it direct or authorize the student groups to seek such funding. Also, such activity was advertised and held in a manner which made clear that that it was being carried on by and in the name of the student group and not the University. (Exhibit 3).

In addition, the University, as for all student programming events, took reasonable steps to avoid the appearance of institutional endorsement or support. The University did not promote the event; it did not make any public statements, oral or written, which could be perceived as University support or endorsement of the event, and no University officials appeared at the event with Michael Moore. While a University facility—McMicken Commons, an outdoor venue—was used for the event, the use of such facilities for programming events and speakers sponsored by student groups are permissible. Indeed, McMicken Commons often has been used as a limited forum open to all student groups sponsoring discussions of philosophical, religious, social, and political subjects.

IV. Objective was to Encourage Diverse Opinions not to Influence an Election

While the University does not desire to speak on behalf of its students, there is no indication that the intent or objective of the programming event was to influence an election. As noted by the Program Coordinator for Campus Events and Programming, the objective for Michael Moore's event was to "promote reasoned discourse" and "to provide avenues for students to obtain the skills needed to function effectively in diverse settings and with individuals from various backgrounds and perspectives." (Exhibit 4—Response letter to individuals inquiry about Michael Moore's visit). To that end, the Programs and Activities Council "made every effort to define the boundaries of acceptable speech to Mr. Moore's management and agent prior to the engagement." (Exhibit 4). And as reported in at least one news report, contracting with Greater Talent Network offered a unique opportunity for students to "bring a big name filmmaker to campus to discuss relevant issues" at a reduced speaking fee and to "encourage students and faculty... to get out and vote." (Exhibit 5).

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Even if it is determined that Mr. Moore spoke on campus with the "purpose of influencing the election," any payment to Mr. Moore could not be considered a prohibited contribution or expenditure. The student groups did not have the statutorily required intent or purpose when making such payment. That is, the objective of the student programming event was not "for the purpose" of influencing an election for Federal office, but was rather to provide an educational environment that encourages students to debate and take diverse positions on matters of public importance.

V. Conclusion

As explained and established in the attached documents, the University made no contribution or expenditure in connection with any election for Federal office. All lecture fee payments to Mr. Moore were made by student groups. All the University did was provide an outdoor space for the public appearance on the same basis as it provides the space to other speakers who are sponsored by student groups. Indeed, an attempt by the University to influence or curb the political and ideological views of its students by disallowing the event quite possibly would have been met with a constitutional challenge for interfering with the First Amendment rights of students.

Accordingly, because the University of Cincinnati did not violate 2 U.S.C. 441(b), it respectfully request that the FEC dismiss the complaint filed by Mr. Hardy and to take no action against it as it relates to MUR 5550.

Jan Alan Neiger
Associate General Counsel
University of Cincinnati

Enclosures

cc: President Nancy Zimpher

State of Ohio) ss.
County of Hamilton)

Jan Alan Neiger, being first duly sworn, deposes and says: I have head, indeed written, the above, and it is true and correct.

My Commission expires

PATRICE A. WOERNER
Notary Public, State of Ohio
My Commission Expires Aug. 8, 2007

Event: Michael Moore, 10/27/04

26044142976

Financial Sponsors: Programs & Activities Council (PAC), Undergraduate Funding Board (UFB), Racial Awareness Program (RAPP), Latinos En Accion (LEA)

	<u>Vendor/Purpose</u>	Fund transfer to PAC to support performance fees	Fund transfer to PAC to support performance fees	Fund transfer to PAC to support performance fees	
	Accounting	NIU #123779	NIU #144641	200 #398077	
	Amount	\$2,050.00	RAPP \$1,000.00	\$100.00	\$3,150.00
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	Vendor/Purpose	Greater Talent Network/Performance Fee (Inclusive)	Thunderbolt Systems/Production Fee	Rent-A-Center/Furniture rental per contract rider	All American Rental/Furniture rental per contract rider	Pizza Hut/Lunch for load-in help	Gold Star Chili/Lunch for load-in help	Kinko's/Oversized, cardstock copies of promo	Loesch Hardware/Supplies for recording signs	
	Accounting	PO #PC05L-00867	PO #PC05A-01012	P-Card	P-Card	P-Card	P-Card	P-Card	P-Card	
	Amount	\$8,000.00	\$1,725.00	\$32.52	\$81.75	\$26.23	\$23.97	\$46.44	\$15.73	\$9,951.64
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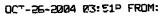
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Exhibit	2	

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Rev. Rul. 72-512

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Sec. 501

IRS Headnote

A university is not participating in political campaigns within the meaning of section 501(c)(3) of the Code by providing a political science course that requires the students' participation in political campaigns of candidates of their choice.

Full Text

Rev. Rul. 72-512

Advice has been requested whether, in the circumstances described below, an organization has participated in political campaigns on behalf of candidates for public office within the meaning of section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1954.

The organization is a university exempt from Federal income tax as an educational organization described in section 501(c)(3) of the Code. As part of its political science program, it provides a credit course to acquaint students with the basic techniques of effective participation in the electoral system. Any student may register in the course. The student participates in several weeks of classroom work to learn about political campaign methods, then he is excused from classes for two weeks to participate in the political campaign of a candidate of his choice. After the election, the student must show by means of a log that he has spent between 60 and 80 hours on campaign work and must write a paper evaluating his experiences.

The university does not influence the student in his choice of a candidate or control his campaign work. The university is reimbursed or paid for any services or facilities provided to the students for use in connection with the campaigns.

Section 501(c)(3) of the Code provides for the exemption from Federal income tax of organizations that are organized and operated exclusively for educational purposes and that do not participate in any political campaign on behalf of any candidate for public office.

Section 1.501(c)(3)-1(d)(3) of the regulations defines the term "educational" as including the instruction or training of the individual for the purpose of improving or developing his capabilities.

The course described above is exclusively educational in nature since it is provided as part of the university's political science program solely for the purpose of improving or developing the student's knowledge and skills.

The student activities in question represent a bona fide course of conduct in fulfillment of a formal



course of instruction conducted by the university. Where the extent and manner of student participation in the actual political process in such cases is reasonably germane to the course of instruction, the fact that such course is a part of the university's curriculum and that university personnel and facilities are employed in its conduct does not make the university a party to the expression or dissemination of political views of the individual students in the course of their actual campaign activities within the intendment of section 501(c)(3).

Accordingly, it is held that this university is not participating in political campaigns on behalf of candidates for public office within the meaning of section 501(c)(3) of the Code.

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Film Maker Michael Moore At **UC Wednesday**

Reported by: 9News Web produced by: Neil Relyea Photographed by: 9News 10/27/04 4:45:00 PM

Film maker Michael Moore of "Farenheit 9/11" fame is in town Wednesday.

Moore is speaking at the University of Cincinnati late Wednesday afternoon.

The film maker, whose works also include "Roger & Me" and "Bowling for Columbine," was at the New Friendship Baptist Church in Avondale earlier in the day, where criticized the Bush administration and announced three free showings of "Farenheit 9/11."

The shows will begin Friday night and run through Saturday.

Several student groups reportedly pooled their resources to bring him to the UC campus

AUDIO/VIDEO

9News Report 10/27/04 9News Interview 9/24/04 We use RealVideo format only. Click here for help.

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Michael Moore Web Site

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Michael Moore to speak at UC (WCPO/WCPO.com)



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Friday Morning

Thieves On Loose After Cars Vandalized Overnight

Thursday Evening

- One Boy Shot In Chest After Kids Play With Gun
- After Months Of Searching, Family Finds Closure
- Another Step Towards Brent Spence Bridge Replacement
- Survivors Support Network Challenges Archdiocese
- More Studies Advised Before P&G's Sex Hormone Patch Hits The **Market**
- State Senator Asks Gov. Taft To Help End City's Brownouts
- Kerry Campaign Keeps An Eye On Ohio Elections Cases
- Judge Rules In Favor Of Developers In Norwood Eminent Domain Case





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November	8,	2004
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Dear	
DCai	•

Thank you for your input regarding the program held at the University of Cincinnati's McMicken Commons featuring Mr. Michael Moore.

The Programs & Activities Council, in conjunction with the Racial Awareness Program; E-SAVE; Skeptics; Latinos En Accion; the GLBTQ Alliance; the Arts and Culture Club; and the NAACP at the University of Cincinnati; with financial support from the Undergraduate Funding Board, presented the Michael Moore event with the objective of promoting reasoned discourse. While staying committed to their recognition of free expressions of ideas, I want to assure you that the PAC made every effort to define the boundaries of acceptable speech to Mr. Moore's management and agent prior to the engagement.

The goal of the Program & Activities Council (PAC) is to coordinate and promote activities that not only enhance leadership, but also endorse high standards of civility. The PAC operates with the intent to provide avenues for students to obtain the skills needed to function effectively in diverse settings and with individuals from various backgrounds and perspectives. The Michael Moore event along with the screenings of the movies "FahrenHYPE 9/11" and "Stolen Honor" just a few days later, are only some of the programs produced by the PAC that demonstrate this commitment.

In the end, I was proud to witness a Cincinnati community that both spoke and listened with great care, and sought understanding at the deepest level.

I appreciate your feedback and hope to gain your support as we plan for the future of student activities at the University of Cincinnati.

Sincerely,

Brad A. Balser Program Coordinator for Campus Events and Programming University of Cincinnati

cc: Lucy Croft
Director
Student Activities &
Leadership Development

Frank Bowen
Dean of Students
Division of Student Life



Exhibit _5_

The News Record - News Issue: 10/27/04

Michael Moore to speak today

By Kyle Denlinger

With less than one week until University of Cincinnati students and faculty hit the polls, political heavyweight Michael Moore is speaking at 4:30 p.m. today on McMicken Commons.

Fellow George W. Bush critic, Craig Unger, author of New York Times Bestseller House of Bush, House of Saud, will be speaking at 8:45 p.m. in the Great Hall of Tangeman University Center.

Moore's agent requested that Moore speak on campus for a nominal fee, said David Parish, president of Programs and Activities Council.

"One of PAC's functions is to bring entertainers and events to campus. We knew Moore tends to draw a large crowd, and one area of PAC's function that we felt was left unfulfilled in the past was the presence of lecturers relevant to current issues," said Parish.

"From a programming standpoint, this was an opportunity to bring a big name author and filmmaker to campus to discuss relevant issues at a reduced price," he said.

While Moore, famous for his controversial politically-charged documentaries and books, usually charges about \$50,000 for public speaking events, he is speaking at UC for \$8,000, \$3,000 of which PAC is providing, said organizers.

During his speech, Moore will cover a myriad of topics, said organizers.

"Primarily, Moore will encourage students and faculty, especially young students, to get out and vote, but he will also be expressing his political views," Parish said.

Moore, who has been an ardent critic of President Bush in his film Fahrenheit 9/11, cites Unger as a source several times in the record-breaking film.

Unger will be speaking following a showing of the film Hijacking Catastrophe at 7 p.m. in the Great Hall.

Helping to promote and organize Unger's appearance, Marji Mendelsohn and Pam Kuby could be seen Tuesday giving away popcorn and informational flyers outside of TUC.

"We want to get back to a place in society where we're speaking with each other, provoking healthy debate and not voting based on sound bytes," said Mendelsohn, who described herself simply as "a mother concerned about the future of this country."

Working with the New York-based Imagine Festival and the organization Films To See Before You Vote, Mendelsohn, Kuby and others advocate voter education and voting activism, not a particular political party.

The groups were invited by the UC College Democrats, who are also supporting the groups and their voter education initiatives.

"Now is a time for young people to learn and get involved. The world is messed up and it's time for all of us, especially young students like those here at UC, to get involved to try and fix it," Mendelsohn said. "I cannot raise my kids to the best of my ability and give them a world that's